Minutes for December 12, 2007 Assembly meeting

Attendance list
TO BE ADDED

Graduate Student Government Assembly Agenda
Wednesday, December 12, 6pm
Frist Campus Center Room 309

I. Call to Order

II. Special Guest: President Tilghman

III. Decision Items
   A. Approval of Minutes (July, September, October, November) -- Marina Paul
   B. Election Committee -- Silvia Bulow

IV. Reports
   A. Chair - Shin-Yi Lin
   B. Firestone taskforce -- Yaron Ayalon
   C. CPUC Resources -- Ben McKean
   Note: these topics were addressed out of order.

V. New Business

VI. Adjournment

(Next meeting January 9, 2007 at 6pm in Frist 309)

I. Call to Order
The meeting began at 6:13pm.

II. Special Guest: President Shirley Tilghman
Shin-Yi Lin (Chair) introduced guest speaker President Shirley Tilghman. President Tilghman is invited to speak at Assembly meeting every academic year. Shin-Yi asked her two broad questions:

1. “Where do you see graduate education going in the long-term? What are the key challenges and opportunities facing graduate education (e.g., diversity, non-academic career paths, the importance of graduate student life to the graduate experience)?”

2. “How can current graduate students improve their own experience?”

As Pres. Tilghman was most interested in our opinions or recounts of our own experiences, she promised to be brief. She began by saying that she doesn’t see graduate
student education changing much in the next twenty years at all. At Princeton, the exceptions to this include focused professional training in only a handful of masters programs. These programs are the MPA program in the Woodrow Wilson School (WWS), which is intended to train people professionally for a career in public service, and the Master’s program in Architecture, which trains students for professional careers in the field of Architecture. In terms of the scholarly PhD work, within disciplines, she doesn’t see us creating new PhD’s. But there are a number under discussion, for example, Neuroscience. Currently, the University is debating the pros vs. cons about creating a new PhD in this interdisciplinary field.

“Graduate programs at Princeton tend to be small. The University intends to grow grad school at the rate we grow the faculty: this is a very close, very important relationship. We can’t recruit faculty if they don’t have the opportunity to work with the quality of graduate students here.”

“Princeton does better, in my opinion, to bring students through their programs as quickly as we intend to, in terms of time to degree. There is no advantage to keeping students here forever. While graduate education can be very open-ended, students suffer the most from extended stays. We didn’t realize that one graduate program was still on a four-year-program, but it’s not been extended to five years, followed by DCE status.”

“What you do after graduate school is extremely important to us. There are some departments who take this very, very seriously - they work with fifth-year and beyond students for placement. Obviously our placement record reflects back on us, but the primary reason to do is that we feel it is part of our responsibility. Some departments are not as good as others, obviously.”

Pres. Tilghman then spoke from her own experience in the Molecular Biology department. “For placement, it is important for faculty to have a broad view to realize what students can do with a PhD – not only is it unrealistic to expect that all students will go into academia, some students come here never wanting to be professors. It is important to get those students on the right track. Graduate students often encounter individual faculty members who are not open to these avenues.”

Pres. Tilghman felt she had little to say about what to say to students about how to take advantage of their programs here at Princeton. The answer would be a department-dependent one.

She said that Princeton is an extraordinary place in terms of its engagement and its quality – “I hope you smell the roses. I hope you have the opportunity to listen to someone like Linda Cauley, who gave a thrilling lecture yesterday afternoon. I hope you had the opportunity to hear the controversial panel discussion at the Woodrow Wilson School on the Israeli lobby.” She had just been conversing with Jenny Lah (WWS rep), and heard her say she was able to see three great talks in the last two days.
“I hope you’re all doing that. Because going forward, the chances of being able to do this later on, as you’ll be too busy to do this even as faculty members at top universities, is almost too small.”

Pres. Tilghman then opened the floor up for questions.

Yaron Ayalon (NES) acknowledged that there was a relationship between the number of faculty and the number of graduate students, but he wondered if there was a relationship between the number of graduate students and undergrads. He stated a sample problem was that in the Near Eastern Studies department, some courses have suddenly become very popular. For example, the rising popularity of Arabic courses has resulted in our needing more precepts. The classes are overcrowded, even though every graduate student precepts. He asked President Tilghman if Princeton limits enrollment if we don’t have enough preceptors.

Pres. Tilghman responded, “Princeton’s policy is that we don’t let the undergraduates’ tastes determine graduate student enrollment. When we do find ourselves in situations such as the one mentioned above, the solution is to hire lecturers. The departments have those resources and are encouraged to do use them - the most evident example of this is in the department of politics and economics.”

Neven Fuckar (GCO) asked for a clarification of the remaining four year graduate programs. Pres. Tilghman explained that cross the board, programs have been now extended five year programs except one, which is in the process of being converted now.

Giri Parameswaran (ECO) asked Pres. Tilghman what happens to students who are already in four year programs when their programs are changed to five-year ones. Pres. Tilghman responded that these students roll into the five year program too.

A climatologist said that she was surprised that we don’t have many projects tackling Princeton’s responsibility to reduce its own greenhouse emissions. Some of the solutions aren’t being implemented here. What can we do to convince Princeton that this is worthwhile to do?

Pres. Tilghman replied that there should not a problem to convince Princeton to do this. The people to talk to about these concerns are Shana Weber (Sustainability Manager, Engineering and Construction) and the Princeton Environmental Committee chaired by Mike McKay.

The climatologist responded that she works with both - what can we do further? She felt that there may be stopgaps at a higher level.

Shirley Tilghman was very surprised that one would get resistance if you bring forth very good ideas, especially with people involved like Mark Burstein, who oversees Facilities. Her advice was, “Keep pushing!”
Matt Harrison (ENG) brought up that from his discussions with the English department’s students, he learned that there was a substantial fee for DCE status (approximately $3500). These students have to teach six sections, not four. Matt wanted to know if the money was a substantial issue, where programs are being funded by this, or if this an incentive to finish this program. Jeff Dwoskin (Facilities) clarified that if you teach two sections, your DCE tuition is covered. Teaching one section gets you half tuition. A full AI load (six sections) gets you a full stipend. Otherwise the stipend is prorated by the number of sections you teach.

Pres. Tilghman responded that there are costs incurred from DCE status, and the $3500 fee only covers a fraction of those costs. She felt that Princeton’s strategy is to use funds and fees to support students very well for the first five years of their programs. She mentioned that a lot of other universities either spread that cost over time or increase the teaching load. Pres. Tilghman felt that she would prefer that all program lengths were four years. But she recognizes that in reality, it is five years.

Shin-Yi Lin (Chair) asked if Pres. Tilghman had a slightly different answer for programs with heavy language or teaching requirements. Perhaps some of these requirements may have had to be fulfilled by a student before enrolling at Princeton in order to finish the programs in a timely fashion. Pres. Tilghman said that she understands that students that are the most disadvantaged under Princeton’s policy are often the ones who need to learn multiple languages. In the Anthropology program, a student may need to learn additional, rare and/or esoteric languages that they probably wouldn’t have encountered before coming to Princeton. For students in the Art and Archaeology program, it is very critical to learn additional languages. A recent improvement has occurred to the old policies at Princeton, where we took away one year of support for every year of funding a student gained by fellowships - we no longer do this.

Hilary Bergsieker (PSY) asked about the plans to construct a Neuroscience building. In social psychology, the consolidation of a Neuroscience program may be a little scary in terms of job market (psychology is still a social science).

Pres. Tilghman responded that we are very conscious about this problem. The Neuroscientists were originally moved to Icahn labs, and Social psychologists were left in Griggs. Administrators were horrified by this. With the new building plans, the social psych building will be attached to common spaces of the Neuroscience Institute. She emphasized that from a physical planning perspective, Princeton is very aware of this.

Hilary (PSY) felt concerned about how this would affect the meaning of the PhD degree in psychology.

Pres. Tilghman responded, “I hope you’re bringing this up. The push is not coming from grad school.” The life sciences program is an umbrella program. The degree will still be granted from individual departments, such as psychology, molecular biology, etc.
Hilary (PSY) then asked Pres. Tilghman a question about graduate student giving. She recounted that she and her husband have tried to give as current graduate students, but she wasn’t able to donate money to Princeton with the status of a graduate student: they would have had to claim themselves as part of Class of 2011. The corresponding forms didn’t even include their properly spelled names. The outcome was that they decided to give to their undergraduate alumni associations instead.

Pres. Tilghman said she felt horrified. “We’re supposed to be the best at this. It should not be difficult!”

Jeff Dwoskin (Facilities) told Pres. Tilghman, “I’m sure you are aware that the graduate experience varies in different ways, such as travel funds, office space. Is there away to address this?”

Pres. Tilghman replied that this chronic problem at the University: there are discretionary funds available to departments that are a result of giving, and often the way in which these funds are used is restricted. For example, the history department has resources, due to the generosity of Shelby Cullom Davis. The history department’s situation is vastly different from that of the Comparative Literature department. In order to resolve this dilemma in the past, Pres. Shapiro and Provost Eisgruber tried to identify the poorest departments and apply any unallocated dollars when spend-rule changes occurred.

Pres. Tilghman commented on any perceived shortage of building space. She thinks that fifty years from now, the situation will still be just as bad as it is today. The good news is that we aren’t tearing down the current buildings. When departments, like Chemistry, are moving to their new buildings, the old ones (e.g. Frick) will become available for other uses.

Chris Crutchfield (CHM) asked Pres. Tilghman what she envisions is the graduate student’s relationship with Princeton after he/she leaves the University.

Pres. Tilghman replied, “We are trying to answer this. Please give credit to Dean Russel and grad alumnus and Board of Trustees member Eileen Guggenheim. We would like you to think of Princeton as your intellectual home/alma mater. Princeton provided you with an education, supported and launched your career. Until ten years ago, Princeton was very undergraduate-centric in alumni relationships. Now we are changing: for example, graduate alumni are winning the board of trustee elections!”

Dante Ricci (BUT) asked what Pres. Tilghman’s thoughts were on efforts and/or recruiting in terms of diversity of the graduate student body, at both the department level and the graduate school level. He mentioned that the student body in his home department Molecular Biology is homogeneous, excluding a significant population of foreign students from East Asian countries.

Pres. Tilghman responded that efforts needed to be made on both the graduate school level and the individual department level. Dr. Alison Gammie of the Molecular Biology
Department has been working towards improving diversity in especially the departments of Chemistry and Molecular Biology. This has to happen at the department level – and you need a champion. She mentioned Dr. Alison Gammie, Prof. David Botstein and Prof. Bonnie Bassler of the Molecular Biology department are making such efforts. In terms of the graduate school level, she mentioned that Karen Weaver, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Diversity, arrived last summer. Dean Weaver is a graduate of the class of 1995 and is also African-American.

Kevin Collins (POL) asked what the representation of different groups was in the graduate student body. President Tilghman exclaimed that she should have looked at these numbers before coming to Assembly meeting! She writes these numbers to Board of Trustees every year. She gave some approximate ranges: Women are in the 30-35% range. When Silvia Newell asked her to clarify the percentages of women in Engineering, Pres. Tilghman mentioned that there was a large difference in the representation of women between the sciences and engineering vs. humanities, and there was even some variation amongst the Engineering departments. There are very few women in Engineering, except in Chemical Engineering. 40% of the graduate student body is international. African Americans make up about 3% of the graduate student body, Hispanic students also make up a low percent in the single digits, while Asians are at much higher numbers, but it is hard to recall the numbers. She expressed the belief that no school is doing better than Princeton for women.

Marina Paul (Recording Secretary) asked Pres. Tilghman, “Last time you addressed Assembly, you spoke about how the University is moving away from Dean West’s perspective about the role of graduate students in the University. Can you tell us what the new perspective is, esp. in terms of social involvement?”

In response to that, Pres. Tilghman said that she would be especially interested in feedback about students’ inclusion in residential colleges. What have their responses been?

Bob MacGregor (Corresponding Secretary) spoke from his experience as a Resident Graduate Student (RGS) in Mathey College. Bob said that it is too early to comment, but in his experience it’s going well so far. Pres. Tilghman asked Bob whether he would advise friends to participate. Bob said yes he would. He also added that the financial and housing benefits are incentives to keep graduate students enrolling in the program.

One of the problems of the era of Dean West is that grad students are located in satellites of the University. Pres. Tilghman recollected from the past room draw, that there were twice the applications for RGS’s as there are positions. She is interested to see how it turns out this next application round, and pointed out that maybe Princeton should be thinking about this unmet need.

Pres. Tilghman remarked that the Campus Club is being developed as a place to welcome grad students as well as undergrads. Hopefully, it will open next year. The graduate students will have a place other than the Graduate College or the D-Bar.
Pres. Tilghman then said this is a question for you all – what would you like? We have a varied grad student population – we need to hear what you would like and you’re your expectations are.

Neven Fuckar (GCO) asked Pres. Tilghman whether there were any plans to move the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory (GFDL), currently at Forrestal campus, to main campus or anywhere nearby. Pres. Tilghman responded, “We understand the intellectual argument for this. Not just made up of GEO faculty, GFDL has government employees who are extraordinary scientists.” Neven added “these are old buildings – they are working on asbestos problems – this tells you about the state about the building!”

Pres. Tilghman responded that one potential obstacle is that in the case of GFDL, some fraction of the building is secure. The university policy is that everything at the University has to be usable and accessible for graduate students and undergrad students, and any findings should be publishable. Neven Fuckar (GCO) and Kelly Kearney (GEO) both explained that “it depends on your definition of security! Yes, the computers are definitely secure”.

Pres. Tilghman explained that yes, we’ve had discussions about this issue. But due to money and priorities in our ten-year capital plan, we are already adding two million square feet for Chemistry, Neuroscience, ORFE, and the Creative Center. “There is only so much we can do – our plate is pretty full.”

Dan Raburn (PPL) added that in the case of plasma physics, there is no classified info on-site, and that such information has to be moved off-site. There are, however, hazardous and special-access materials. The management of Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory is up for contract. Dan asked how committed is Princeton, and Pres. Tilghman assured Dan that Princeton is very committed to holding on to this contract, and Princeton considers PPPL an integral part of this University. She then added that their motto is to “Fight like tigers!” When Neven Fuckar (GCO) asked if Princeton is also committed to the contract of GFDL, Pres. Tilghman said this was absolutely true in this case also, adding that now was not the time to withdraw Princeton’s effort on the study of climatology.

Pres. Tilghman reminded Assembly of her regular weekly office hours, where students could speak with her about any issues privately, and these hours were available to all on a first-come-first-serve basis. The current hours are posted on the Princeton University website.

Shin-Yi Lin (Chair) thanked Pres. Tilghman for her time and efforts with the graduate student government.

III. Decision Items

A. Approval of the Minutes
The approval of the minutes for July, September, October and November 2007 was moved to later in the meeting – see the Chair’s report.

B. Election committee – Silvia Newell
The Election committee performs functions related to electing people to the GSG Executive Committee, and thus a student can’t be member of the Elections committee if he/she wants to run for a position on Exec. If you should later decide to run for Exec, you would have to step down from your position on the Election committee.

Silvia Newell announced that she would like to run for Exec next year, so this automatically disqualifies her from being on the Election Committee.

The duties of the Election committee include coming up with an election plan, for which Silvia has already prepared a timeline. Additional duties include coordinating with the other Election committee members, advertising the elections to the student body, and running the voting process.

So far, four people have announced their interest in serving on the committee to the GSG, Dan Raburn (PPL, Press Secretary), Pablo Mosteiro (PHY), Grace Wang (CPUC), and Giri Parameswaran (ECO). Dan Raburn is willing to run for the position of the Election Committee Chair. Jeff Dwoskin has volunteered to take on an advisory role. It will be left to the chair to decide if another member is needed on the committee to bring the number of members to five.

Dan Raburn (Press Sec) noted that undergrad student elections have used flyers posted around campus to advertise student elections successfully. In contrast, GSG has used e-mail to advertise. He suggested that we could also advertise GSG elections with fliers around the reps’ respective departments in order to boost election participation.

After the candidates left the room, written ballots (including choices to accept the slate, accept specific people, etc) were tallied. The candidates were approved 15 to 1.

IV. Reports

A. CPUC Resources - Ben McKean
My name is Ben McKean, and this is my second year as the rep to the Resources Committee. I haven't reported to you before because we hadn't done anything. But now we have!

The CPUC Resources Committee was originally started in the late 60’s, and raised again in 80’s when certain ethical issues came up. Regarding the Darfur situation, we’ll be talking about what the University should be doing about voting on stock proxy policies. Votes are non-binding, but are about topics like social issues. Unlike most universities and colleges, Princeton has no policies, while other Ivy-league schools currently have very elaborate policies on input from students/faculty.
At the CPUC meeting on November 12, Resources Committee chair Prof Nolan McCarty reported on our recommendation to President Tilghman regarding a proposal presented to us by a student group about Princeton's anti-sweatshop policy. Currently, Princeton belongs to the Fair Labor Association (FLA), an organization primarily of apparel producers and colleges which helps both kinds of groups administer anti-sweatshop policy in various ways; Princeton has been involved in the FLA since its founding in 1999 and University Vice President and Secretary Robert Durkee sits on its Board of Directors.

The student group (Princeton for Worker Rights - PWR) recommended that Princeton adopt two additional policies: (1) join the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), an independent monitoring group that visits the factories that produce university-licensed apparel (2) adopt the Designated Supplier Program (DSP), which would ensure that a certain percentage of Princeton apparel is produced in factories that have demonstrated improvements in working conditions according to criteria provided by the WRC (aren't acronyms fun?).

The Resources Committee recommended that Princeton increase its engagement with the WRC and encouraged consideration of membership, and did not make a recommendation regarding the DSP, although it will continue to monitor the development of that program. In response, President Tilghman sent the Committee a letter on December 3rd stating that Princeton will soon submit its application for membership in the WRC and agreeing that the Committee should watch developments with the DSP. Both the Committee's report and Tilghman's letter are available at http://www.princeton.edu/cpuc/cpuc/index.html

To read the full Report of the Resources Committee of the Council of the Princeton University Committee Academic Year 2006-2007, see 12a-ResourcesReport.pdf

To read President Tilghman’s letter, see 12b-PresidentResponse.pdf

Kevin Collins (POL) asked what the current status of the University’s investments in Darfur is.

Princeton's direct holdings are "Darfur-free," which isn't difficult since the endowment has only about $400 million in direct holdings of public equities. Most of the endowment is in funds being run by outside managers, often co-mingled with other funds. The problem is that some of those funds managing money for the University still have holdings in companies in Sudan like Petro-China, and those managers are unwilling to divest. One proposal that had been floated was to ask those managers to short Sudan stocks so that the University would purposefully lose money so that it didn't profit from companies in the Sudan, but no one thought that was a particularly good idea since it doesn't accomplish much (even the symbolism is a little weird).
Kevin Collins asked if we could find out how much “blood money” the University is getting from Sudan-invested companies, explaining that this information may inspire people to get involved. McKean acknowledged this and responded that this is why it is difficult to get hold of this information. It was suggested that a corresponding amount could be donated to a charity organization such as Red Cross.

B. Firestone Taskforce – Yaron Ayalon
Yaron Ayalon (NES) gave an update about the recent activities of the Firestone Library Taskforce:

Last assembly meeting a GSG task-force was formed which will address all Firestone Library issues. Yaron was appointed chair of the task force and was entrusted with the duty to form it. The goals of the taskforce are as follows:

1. To monitor progress that is going on with the library renovation project. Seven people are on this taskforce, two of which (David Jorgensen (REL) and Yaron Ayalon (NES)) are on the GSG.
2. To bring people to focus groups. Twenty-one students participated in focus groups with the architects that will be responsible for the library renovation project. Yaron himself was not present at the focus group there, but heard good thing about it.

The group met for the first time on Tuesday, December 11 2007, where they discussed their goals. They will be meeting with Dottie Pearson from the library in the spring.

Shin-Yi Lin (Chair) asked Assembly that they please inform constituents about this taskforce in case they are interested in this. Shin-Yi Lin told Assembly that the guiding principles will be formed by the end of the year, and will be adjusted as the ten years go on.

Yaron – most work will be done over the summers, many of these projects won’t affect work in the library.

Matt Harrison (ENG) asked if there would be more opportunities to participate in focus groups for dialogue with library people. He said he didn’t feel informed enough to advertise to his department. Yaron Ayalon (NES) assured Matt that he has heard concerns, input etc. from many students from the English department. Shin-Yi Lin added that you can ask your constituents for feedback/opinions, compile this feedback, and send this to the relevant people.

C. Chair’s report – Shin-Yi Lin

1. New CPC Olivia Martel
The GSG has bought a farewell gift for Tara McCartney. Tara will begin a new position as the assistant director of Graduate Alumni Relations. Olivia Martel is the new Community Programs Coordinator of the Graduate School. She was the overwhelming choice by students. Coming from Northeastern University, Olivia will be here at the January Assembly meeting. Her office will be in the Graduate College, as was Tara’s.
2. GSG Minutes status

Marina Paul, Recording Secretary, and Bob MacGregor, Corresponding Secretary, have been working hard this month to get caught up to date on the minutes (http://www.princeton.edu/~gsg/minutes.html). For the period in 2006-2007 when we had no Recording Secretary, he has posted the agendas for those meetings; even though the discussions have been lost, at least people can get an idea of what was discussed. For the recent minutes, Marina and Bob have gotten caught up. I would like to thank LaTonya Trotter (Sociology rep) for stepping forward to complete the November minutes.

Dan Raburn (Press Secretary) suggested that a note be added to the November 2007 minutes that while the Institutional Memory Retreat was originally discussed to take place in November, the meeting was postponed (due to low turnout) and moved to January.

Kostas Aisopos (ELE) asked if there was a new date already scheduled. Shin-Yi Lin responded that a discussion for rescheduling is planned for later in today’s meeting. Kevin Collins (POL) motioned to approve all the minutes for July, September, October and the November 2007 (with the suggested amendment to November). The motion was seconded and approved.

3. Birth control subsidy update

Per our emails earlier this month, we are happy to announce that the University has decided to partially subsidize the cost of oral contraceptive costs starting this month. This decision was in large part due to the effort the GSG -- specifically, Silvia Bulow, Jeff Dwoskin, and I -- put into lobbying on behalf of students after the changes in federal law earlier this year. We worked with the USG -- outgoing President Rob Biederman, Vice President Dickerson, Acting Health Services Director Janet Finnie, and Provost Chris Eisgruber.

The subsidy is on the two generics offered by McCosh. The people at McCosh -- specifically, Olga Hernandez (SECH) and Pete Johnson (Medical Director) felt like these are good enough changes to meet the needs of students. The two brands reduced to $6 are: Aviane (Brandname: Alesse) and Cryselle (Brandname: Lo-ovral or Desogen).

They will not be providing subsidies on the following brand name things for which no generic available -- such as Ortho Tricyclin Lo and the Nuva-ring. Again, this is because it is felt that the generics listed above meet most students' needs; because the cost of this subsidy to the University would be much high as they are not generics; and because the regular prescription benefit for students on the SHP covers these items as an alternative.

If there are serious financial issues (e.g., students who can't meet $100 deductible), people should see the following person at McCosh on a case-by-case basis: Jan Runkle (Outpatient Business Manager), who can judge their case and access any special needs funds (such as the fund administered by Dean Montero in the Graduate School).
What follows is the formal announcement at  
http://www.princeton.edu/uhs/news/news.html#contraceptive

Oral Contraceptive Update

Last year, as a result of changes to the federal Deficit Reduction Act, student health centers lost their deep discounts on oral contraceptives from pharmaceutical companies. Many Princeton students subsequently communicated their concern about access to affordable oral contraception.

University Health Services is pleased to report that in response to student concern, the president and provost have agreed to provide funds to subsidize the cost of oral contraceptives for students at Princeton University, pending continued federal discussions about funding.

The University's subsidy is designed to restore the price of oral contraceptives currently offered at University Health Services for students to levels preceding the federal changes. Beginning December 1, 2007, birth control pills sold at UHS will be sold for $6 per pack (reduced from the $15 resulting from the federal changes).

The oral contraceptives offered at UHS include: Aviane (generic of brand name Alesse) and Cryselle (generic of brand name Lo-Ovral). UHS will not be providing subsidies on the following brand name products for which no generic available: Ortho Tricyclin Lo and Nuva-ring. The generics listed above meet most students' needs. Students should be aware that they will continue to have access to their Medco prescription drug benefit, which covers oral contraceptives, if they are on the student health plan, as they always have. Students on private health insurance may also have prescription benefits they can access.

To ensure that students who currently benefit – or may potentially benefit -- from these contraceptive resources are informed of the subsidy, we are notifying current student clients directly, and also peer educators, the Women's Center, the Student Health Advisory Board, the Graduate Student Government and other student networks. There is a move in Congress to reverse at the national level the unintended consequence of changes to the Deficit Reduction Act, and we'll continue to monitor these efforts. For further information go to: http://crowley.house.gov/news/record.asp?id=1076

Posted: December 6, 2007

Shin-Yi Lin informed Assembly of opportunities for those who were interested in lobbying for changes in the federal law.

4. Mentoring survey details

For the past year, the Graduate School has been conducting a mentoring survey focused at the quality of pre-generals mentoring across all departments. The data gathering part of the effort has been completed. They are preparing to make a formal report to the DGS's of the department. However, before they hand the data over to the DGS’s, they
would like to remove any identifying information from the student responses. Dean Russel has asked to me to have Assembly discuss whether it would be appropriate for him to appoint the GSG rep for each DGSC in charge of helping liaise between the Graduate School and the DGSC.

David Jorgensen (REL) asked what the DGSC was. Shin-Yi Lin (Chair) responded that each department has such a committee, made up of students who were supposed to bring up department-specific student concerns, and GSG department rep should be a part of this committee.

A discussion began on whether the student’s department rep should be a part of the DGSC. After a count, four reps present at Assembly are not members of their department’s DGSC. Kelly Kearney (GEO) said that her department emphasizes that the department rep should not also be a part of the DGSC.

Kevin Collins (POL) asked if anyone could expand upon the nature of the survey’s more open-ended questions that contained identifying information. Neither Shin-Yi Lin nor Dean Lisa Schreyer knew the specifics.

Kevin Collins (POL) started a discussion about whether there was a way to “code” this information, for example compiling several responses with similar themes into a result reporting about the responses of “a group of students”. When Shin-Yi Lin said that the concern may be that some departments are too small to do this, Kevin Collins felt that making the comments anonymous may not be possible.

Kelly Kearney (GEO) asked where the comments were going, and Shin-Yi Lin responded that the idea was that GEO gets GEO-specific comments to “sanitize”. But the question is how will it be done?

Matt Harrison (ENG) asked if there is a question about who is the intended audience. “Because our student committee will know who wrote what. We should be getting away from specific students.”

Hilary Bregieker (PSY) said that it sounds like giving it to the department is the exact opposite of what we want.

Shin-Yi Lin asked if we could send this to the DGSC. Dean Russel would like to provide these comments to the DGS, when this process is COMPLETE and after it’s been edited for identifying information.

Yaron asked if each department could get one person who sees this, like the GSG rep or someone else, who agrees to keep the information confidential. After all, this is the way it is done for all private committees.
Kevin Collins (POL) brought up that the issue remains that people didn’t consent to this release of information. After taking a count, about half of Assembly did not feel comfortable with other students being able to see comments with identifying information.

Raghuveer Vinukollu (CEE) was not sure he understood whether qualitative coding would be an acceptable method. Hilary Bergsieker (PSY) explained the qualitative coding scheme used by social scientists. The method involves that a coder reads all or a portion of the documents, distill the themes, look at 10 to 30 responses, and have two coders read through the responses and see if they agree.

Hilary (PSY) added that she felt that once this has been anonymized and quantitated, she would no longer have a problem with someone reading these comments.

Robert Harrison (ENG) added that many critical comments were also made about our DGS, and we would be concerned about protection from retribution. Shin-Yi Lin assured Assembly that’s what we are aware of.

5. Volunteer opportunities within the GSG

*Exec has compiled a list of volunteer opportunities that we encourage you to forward to your constituents. If you are interested in getting involved, please email me. Also, we have rescheduled our GSG retreat from earlier this month to January to hopefully accommodate more interested students.*

There are volunteer opportunities in the following areas. See 12-ChairsReport.pdf for details.

- Health and life
- Campus life
- Facilities
- Academic affairs

V. New Business

A. Rescheduling the Institutional Memory Meeting – Silvia Newell

Jan 16 or 23 2007 are potential dates for the rescheduled “Brain Drain” meeting.

David Jorgensen started a discussion on the merits of holding Assembly meeting in January. “Why hold January assembly meeting? Many of religious studies students don’t need to be here in January. A lot of people won’t be able to make it here”. Silvia Newell and Dan Raburn explained that it is the policy of the GSG to hold an Assembly meeting every month of the year, and meetings may be postponed within the month to accommodate major scheduling issues, but assembly meetings are not generally cancelled altogether.

Returning to the topic of the institutional memory meeting, Kostas Aisopos (ELE) felt that a weekend date may be more convenient for some graduate students. Hilary
Bergsieker (PSY) added that the retreat would be more motivating after elections. Andrew Ballinger (AOS) felt that with exams in January, it may be difficult for students to want to focus on this.

David Jorgensen brought up holding assembly meeting in January again. “Do we still need the assembly meeting on January? January is the month of exams, and if we’re here on campus, we’re working really hard, or we’re not here.” In response, Silvia Newell (Parliamentary Sec) said that lots of people can’t make it during the year - the best solution is to send a proxy.

B. Housing Policy Meeting
Dan Raburn (Press Secretary) announced that there was going to be a housing policy meeting next week. Jeff Dwoskin (Facilities) and a few others will be attending. Regarding the question of how children factor into the limitations on occupancy of graduate-housing-run apartments, there will be a change to the housing policy: children under 2 years of age at the start of the housing contract will not be included in the occupancy count. If anyone has questions about this or is interested in getting involved, please e-mail gsg@ or Jeff Dwoskin (Facilities).

C. Exec/Assembly Relations
Silvia Newell commented on last month’s criticisms on the Exec committee and future plans to rectify concerns. “Last month, how Exec runs was criticized. We have taken on a larger workload to make it easier for Assembly members to do their job – to show up to these meetings, and communicate with their constituents.” In order to relieve some of the burdens on Exec and allow it to perform its designated functions more efficiently, to allow Assembly to get more involved in GSG activities, and to bridge the gap between Exec and Assembly, the following plans have been initiated:

1. The volunteer list - several people have already signed up.
2. The “Brain Drain” / Institutional Memory Retreat – we have rescheduled hoping that this will aid in decreasing disparity between Exec and Assembly, so please don’t see it only as a way to pass on knowledge to the new exec.

Andrew Ballinger (AOS) asked about subcommittees – are these defined positions? He felt that the more you legitimize the position, the more people will get involved.

Kevin Collins (POL) brought up that perhaps activity levels are correlated with other factors. We’ve had more activity with Facilities committees, because we have more grievances.

David Jorgensen asked if the e-bulletin could clarify who is eligible for all these positions. Kevin Collins asked if there were groups or positions that you are trying to fill. The positions for which volunteers are needed include: Campus Club Board, committee chairs, President’s Advisory Committee on Architecture (PACA), Frist Center Stage, and Labyrinth Advisory Committee Meeting.
VI. Adjournment

At 8:08 pm, the meeting adjourned.